

Message Text

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 01 SAN SA 01803 01 OF 02 142335Z
ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 HA-05
/073 W

-----022834 150033Z /66

R 142240Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7695
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
AMEMBASSY PANAMA
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS CZ
DIA WASHDC

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 SAN SALVADOR 1803

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT PINS SHUM ES
SUBJ: GOVERNMENT OF EL SALVADOR'S POSITION ON RECENT RURAL VIOLENCE
AND SEIZURE OF FOREIGN EMBASSIES

REF: SAN SALVADOR 1753, SAN SALVADOR 1771

SUMMARY: IN 90- MINUTE PRESENTATION, PRESIDENT ROMERO
ACCOMPANIED BY VICE PRESIDENT AND RANKING ARMED FORCES
AUTHORITIES PRESENTED TO ASSEMBLED DIPLOMATIC CORPS
GOVERNMENT OF EL SALVADOR POSITION ON RECENT RURAL VIOLENCE

AND SEIZURE OF FOREIGN EMBASSIES. PRESIDENT ASSERTED GOES
HAS ACTED WITH GREAT PATIENCE AND RESTRAINT, DENIED ANY
UNDUE USE OF FORCE OR MILITARY OCCUPATION OF AFFECTED
AREAS, AND SHARPLY CRITICIZED OPPOSITION AND CHURCH
ELEMENTS WHOM HE TERMED RESPONSIBLE FOR RECENT SITUATION
LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 02 SAN SA 01803 01 OF 02 142335Z

AND PROPAGANDA EXPLOITATION THEREOF. END SUMARY.

1. ON SHORT NOTICE, CHIEFS OF MISSION OF LOCAL DIPLOMATIC
CORPS WERE CALLED TO PRESIDENT'S OFFICE AT 10:00 AM
TODAY. ON HAND TO RECEIVE THEM WERE PRESIDENT ROMERO,
VICE PRESIDENT ASTACIO, MINISTER AND VICE MINISTER OF
NATIONAL DEFENSE AND CHIEF OF STAFF OF ARMED FORCES.

PRESIDENT ROMERO LEAD OFF BY SAYING THAT HE WISHED TO BRIEF ASSEMBLED DIPLOMATS ON RECENT RURAL VIOLENCE AND SEIZURES OF FOREIGN EMBASSIES IN EL SALVADOR WHICH WERE IN REALITY PART OF LARGER WORLD PICTURE.

2. AT PRESIDENT'S REQUEST, MINISTER OF DEFENSE REVIEWED RECENT OCCURRENCES. HE NOTED THAT IN BOTH 1977 AND 1978 HOLY WEEK HAD BEEN SEIZED UPON AS A PROPQUIOUS TIME FOR SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITY. LAST YEAR LAND SEIZURES HAD OCCURRED, OSTENSIBLY IN NAME OF AGRARIAN REFORM BUT ACTUALLY AS BASIS FOR INSURRECTION. FACT OF ITS BEING HOLY WEEK HAD IMPEDED AND DISCOURAGED STRONG GOVERNMENT REACTION AND LANDS THEN SEIZED WERE ONLY SLOWLY GIVEN UP OVER SUBSEQUENT MONTHS. THIS YEAR AGAIN ON WEDNESDAY OF HOLY WEEK, GOES BEGAN TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM SATELLITE COMMUNITIES (CANTONES) OF SAN PEDRO PERULAPAN THAT MEMBERS OF FECCAS AND UTC UNDER LEADERSHIP GG BLOQUE POPULAR REVOLUCIONARIO WERE BEGINNING A PERSUECUTION OF THOSE OPPOSED TO THEM AND THEIR IDEAS. HERE MINDEF INTERPOSED THAT BPR ACTIONS AND STATEMENTS ARE CLEARLY MARXIST-LENINIST AIMED AT INSTALLATION OF SOCIALIST GOVERNMENT IN EL SALVADOR. AGAIN HOLY WEEK IMPEDED PROMPT GOVERNMENT RESPONSE AND TROOPS WERE PLACED ON ALERT BUT DID NOT ENTER INTO ACTION. AS RURAL VIOLENCE INCREASED, REFUGEES BEGAN ARRIVING AT SAN PEDRO PERULAPAN. EARLY REPORTS LISTED SEVEN DEAD, MANY WOUNDED, THEFT OF ANIMALS, PERSONAL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 03 SAN SA 01803 01 OF 02 142335Z

PROPERTY, ETC. GOES NOTIFIED RED CROSS BUT WAS ABLE RECEIVE ONLY LIMITED ASSISTANCE FROM IT IN VIEW OF THAT ORGANIZATION'S ANNUAL PREOCCUPATION WITH PROBLEMS GROWING OUT OF HOLY WEEK EXODUS FROM CITIES TO BEACHES. AS A RESULT, SAID MINDEF, ARMED FORCES SENT IN MEDICAL TEAMS AND ESTABLISHED FIRST-AID POSTS IN SAN PEDRO PERULAPAN AREA. PRESS FOLLOWED AND BEGAN TO PHOTOGRAPH AND ASK QUESTIONS OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN REFUGEES. THESE PHOTOS AND THOSE OF MEDICAL ASSISTANCE BEING PROVIDED BY GOES DISPLEASED BPR AND STIMULATED IT TO BEGIN PROGRAM OF COUNTERPROPAGANDA CHARGING GOVERNMENT ITSELF WITH BEING INSTIGATOR OF RURUL VIOLENCE. NOT UNTIL FOLLOWING WEDNESDAY DID FIRST CONTINGENT OF ARMED SECURITY PERSONNEL ENTER AREA. THEY CAPTURED MANY BUT QUICKLY RELEASED NON-SERIOUS CASES TO RETURN TO THEIR HOMES. MINDEF COMMENTED HERE THAT SAN PEDRO PERULAPAN ZONE DURING A YEAR OR MORE HAS BEEN LIKE A SANCTUARY TO BPR AND RELATED SUBVERSIVE ELEMENTS. SOON THEREAFTER, HE SAID, GROUPS OF PEASANTS MIXED WITH STUDENTS BEGAN TO ARRIVE IN SAN SALVADOR. THEY WENT USUALLY TO SAN JOSE DE LA MONTANA BUT EVENTUALLY SEIZED THE CATHEDRAL AND FOUR FOREIGN EMBASSIES. MINDEF ASSERTED AS FACT THAT SOME STUDENTS

WERE DISGUISED AS PEASANTS.

3. PRESIDENT ROMERO THEN TOOK THE FLOOR. HE SAID THAT THIS IS NOT A 1976, 1977 OR 1978 PHENOMENON BUT RATHER SOMETHING WHICH HAS BEEN COMING FOR A LONG TIME.

GESTURING TOWARD THE DAY'S NEWSPAPERS ON THE TABLE BEFORE HIM, HE NOTED PRESS ACCOUNTS OF TROUBLES, AGITATION AND SUBVERSION IN MANY OTHER PLACES AND ASSERTED THAT ALL OF THIS WAS PART OF A WORLD MOVEMENT. IN THE FACE OF INCITATION, GOES HAS BEEN EXTREMELY PATIENT AND FOREBEARING-- EVEN NOW WITH FOUR FOREIGN EMBASSIES BEING OCCUPIED BY BPR. ONE SECTOR, HE SAID, IS BEHIND ALL THESE DISTURBANCES, BOTH URBAN AND RURAL. AS A CURIOUS ASPECT OF THE RURAL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 04 SAN SA 01803 01 OF 02 142335Z

VIOLENCE, HE NOTED THAT IT HAD OCCURRED NOT IN AN AREA OF LARGE AND TRADITIONAL LAND HOLDINGS BUT RATHER IN AN AREA OF MINIFUNDIA.

4. PRESIDENT NOTED THAT PRESENT MEETING WAS TAKING PLACE EVEN WITHOUT PRESENCE OF ATTENDANCE FROM MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS. WE WISH TO SPEAK FRANKLY, HE SAID, AND WE HAVE ABSOLUTELY NOTHING TO HIDE. WE WILL PROSECUTE THE GUILTY BUT WE ARE NOT PERSECUTING OR EXPELLING ANYONE. AT THIS POINT HE EXTENDED HIS PERSONAL CONGRATULATIONS TO THE FOUR CHIEFS OF MISSION PRESENT WHOSE EMBASSIES WERE OCCUPIED. THEY HAD COMPORTED THEMSELVES "VALIANTLY" IN THE FACE OF AN ENEMY SEEKING PUBLICITY BOTH HERE AND ABROAD. HE SUGGESTED THAT IF NOT SUPPLIED WITH FOOD AND WATER THOSE OCCUPYING THE FOUR EMBASSIES WOULD DEPART. THEY WERE NOT WELL-INTENTIONED PEOPLE; EVEN SOME OF THE WOMEN ARE ARMED AND MORE AGGRESSIVE THAN THE MEN. GOES, HE SAID, HAS BEEN VERY PATIENT AND BELIEVES IT HAS ACTED IN PROPER MANNER. IT HAS EVEN MET WITH MEMBERS OF THE CLERGY TO SEEK EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE HELP IN BRINGING THIS ANOMALOUS SITUATION TO AN END. ON THE OTHER HAND FROM OTHER CHURCH ELEMENTS WE HEAR RADIO BROADCASTS THAT SOUND JUST LIKE CHE GUEVARRA AND THE CHURCH NEWSPAPER "ORIENTACION" IS VICIOUS IN ITS ATTACKS. HERE PRESIDENT ROMERO SAID THAT INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO THE GOVERNMENT INDICATES THE PARTICIPATION OF A SPECIFIC SECTOR DEEPLY COMMITTED TO THE REFORMS OF THE MEDELLIN CONFERENCE OF BISHOPS IN 1968.

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

NNN

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 01 SAN SA 01803 02 OF 02 142353Z
ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 HA-05
/073 W

-----023072 150031Z /66

R 142240Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7696
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
AMEMBASSY PANAMA
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS CZ
DIA WASHDC

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 2 OF 2 SAN SALVADOR 1803

5. PRESIDENT AGAIN ASKED RHETORICALLY WHY RECENT VIOLENCE OCCURRED ONLY IN THE CENTRAL ZONE OF THE COUNTRY AND RARELY ELSEWHERE. HE NOTED THAT MILITARY ATTACHES WERE TAKEN YESTERDAY TO SEE FOR THEMSELVES THE TRUE SITUATION IN THE AFFECTED AREA, AND HE INVITED THE CHIEFS OF MISSION SIMILARLY TO GO AND SEE FOR THEMSELVES. MENTIONING VARIOUS AFFECTED COMMUNITIES, HE REPEATED THAT ALL ARE FOUND IN THE CENTRAL ZONE OF THE COUNTRY, PERHAPS, HE SAID, IS BECAUSE THE CONCENTRATION OF POPULATION AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS MAY BE MORE SERIOUS THERE. GOES IS PERSUADED, HOWEVER, THAT RESOLUTION OF THESE PROBLEMS IS NOT THE ANSWER AND WOULD NOT TERMINATE VIOLENCE OF THE OPPSOTION.

6. PRESIDENT THEN ASKED ALL ASSEMBLED CHIEFS OF MISSION TO TAKE NOTE OF GOVERNMENT'S POSITION AS NOW BEING SET
LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 02 SAN SA 01803 02 OF 02 142353Z

FORTH AND TO COMMUNICATE IT TO THEIR GOVERNMENTS AS THE TRUE STORY OF WHAT IS HAPPENING IN EL SALVADOR. GOES, HE SAID, IS NOT ACTING WITH FORCE AS ITS ENEMIES SAY. THERE HAS BEEN NO VIOLENCE IN THE CASE OF ANY OCCUPIED

EMBASSY, SUPPLIES AND COMMUNICATIONS HAVE NOT BEEN CUT OFF, AND PEOPLE ARE FREE TO MOVE IN AND OUT AS THEY WISH. SALVADORAN CITIZENS ASK "WHAT IS THE GOVERNMENT DOING?" BUT AS WE SEE IT, IN VIEW OF EXTRA-TERRITORIAL CHARACTER OF EMBASSY PREMISES, GOES CANNOT ACT UNTIL INVITED TO DO SO. PROBLEM MUST BE SOLVED SOON, HOWEVER, PERHAPS THIS WEEKEND. IN VEILED REFERENCE TO ELEMENTS OF CATHOLIC CHURCH, PRESIDENT AGAIN SAID GOES HAS INFO AS TO TRUE IDENTITY OF THOSE RESPONSIBLE, THAT LATTER HAVE MONEY AND PEOPLE WORKING FOR IT IN ALL COUNTRIES OF THE WORLD, AND THAT IT IS REVEALING THAT REFUGEES FROM COUNTRYSIDE TURN TO THEM RATHER THAN TO RED CROSS OR OTHER NON-POLITICAL SOURCES OF ASSISTANCE.

7. VICE PRESIDENT ASTACION THEN SPOKE BRIEFLY. HE NOTED THAT RECENT ACTIONS ARE IN FACT IN VIOLATION OF LAWS OF THE NATION, HE TOO WONDERED ALOUD WHY RURAL VIOLENCE HAD OCCURRED IN AN AREA OF SMALL LAND HOLDINGS, HE DEFINED THESE RECENT DISTURBANCES AS A FIGHT FOR POLITICAL POWER, AND WITH REGARD TO THE CHURCH HE PLACED THE BLAME UPON INDIVIDUALS RATHER THAN THE INSTITUTION PER SE. AS PERTINENT, HE CITED RECENT SUSPENSION OF TEN PRIESTS BY A LOCAL BISHOP (A-38, 4/11/78).

8. PRESIDENT THEN CITED RECENT RASH OF MAJOR FIRES WHICH HAVE UNNERVED POPULATION OF SAN SALVADOR. HE SAID THESE FIRES WERE NOT ACCIDENTAL BUT PROBABLY SET TO INJURE PEOPLE OF SCARCE RESOURCES AND TURN THEM AGAINST GOES. IN SIMILAR VEIN HE SAW KIDNAPPING OF PROFESSIONAL PERSONS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 03 SAN SA 01803 02 OF 02 142353Z

AS TACTIC TO TURN THEIR CLASS AGAINST GOES AND ATTEMPT TO UNDERMINE NATIONAL ECONOMY. APPARENTLY PURPOSE OF THESE TWO INSERTIONS WAS TO FURTHER DEMONSTRATE HOSTILE FORCES FACING GOES.

9. AT PRESIDENT ROMOER'S REQUEST, MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENSE THEN READ ARTICLES 157 AND 158 OF NATIONAL CONSTITUTION AND ARTICLE 14 OF SOME REGULATION HAVING TO DO WITH RADIO STATIONS TO PROVE THAT PROPAGANDA OUTPUT OF CATHOLIC CHURCH ELEMENTS IS CLEARLY OUTSIDE LAW OF THE NATION. THE PRESIDENT THEN POINTED TO A LETTER BEFORE HIM AND SAID THAT HE HAD SENT THIS TO A HIGH PRELATE OF THE CHURCH TO SEE WHAT MIGHT BE ACCOMPLISHED WITHOUT HAVING TO APPLY THE LAW.

10. PRESIDENT THEN INVITED VIEWS OR COMMENTS OF THOSE PRESENT. FOR MOST PART, THESE WERE UNEXCEPTIONALLY AND PRESIDENT THEN ASKED DIRECTLY IF PARTICIPANTS IN SAME WOULD LIKE TO TELL HIM ABOUT THEIR MEETING WITH ARCHBISHOP

ROMERO. ACTING AS SPOKESMAN, AMBASSADOR OF COSTA RICA
EXPLAINED THAT THE FOUR CHIEFS OF MISSION WHOSE EMBASSIES
ARE OCCUPIED HAD GONE TO ARCHBISHOPRIC BUT HAD NOT MET

WITH ARCHBISHOP HIMSELF. THEY HAD MET WITH AUXILIARY
BISHOP REVELO AND A "NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE" WHICH DIRECTLY
OR INDIRECTLY SEEMED ABLE TO SPEAK ON BEHALF OF BPR. ACCORDING
TO COSTA RICAN AMBASSADOR, WHEN THE FOUR CHIEFS OF MISSION
WERE FACED WITH BPR DEMANDS FOR CONDITIONS TO BE MET
PRECEDENT TO DEPARTURE OF OCCUPYING GROUPS, THEY
IMMEDIATELY REPLIED THAT THEY COULD NOT SPEAK OR TAKE
POSITIONS ON INTERNAL SALVADORAN MATTERS. OF THE
DEMANDS PRESENTED TO THEM, THE ONLY ONE SUSCEPTIBLE OF
COMPLIANCE WAS THAT THEY INFORM THEIR OWN GOVERNMENTS OF
THE STATEMENTS AND POSITIONS OF THE BPR FORCES. THEY IN TURN
SUGGESTED SOME KIND OF MEDIATION OCCUR BETWEEN BPR AND GOES
WITH AN EYE TO RELEASE IN PEACEFUL FASHION OF EMBASSIES NOW
LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 04 SAN SA 01803 02 OF 02 142353Z

BEING OCCUPIED. A SUBSEQUENT MEETING ON THIS SUBJECT SCHEDULED
FOR 10:00 AM TODAY HAD NECESSARILY HAD TO BE POSTPONED
IN VIEW OF PRESIDENT ROMERO'S INVITATION TO COME TO HIS OFFICE.

11. IN CLOSING THE MEETING, PRESIDENT ROMERO THANKED
ALL PRESENT FOR HAVING COME ON SUCH SHORT NOTICE. GOES
POSITION, HE SAID, IS THAT IT WILL CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN A CALM
ATTITUDE AND TO DEAL REASONABLY WITH THIS DIFFICULT SITUATION.
IT SEES ITSELF FACED BY AN ENEMY WHICH SEEKS ONLY THE CONQUEST
OF POLITICAL POWER. THAT ENEMY IS PART OF A WORLD MOVEMENT
AND WILL USE EVERY ARTIFICE TO PUSH ITS CAUSE AND TO ACHIEVE
ITS PUBLICITY. (AS EVIDENCE OF THIS, PRESIDENT MENTIONED AND
PANAMANIAN AMBASSADOR CONFIRMED THAT THREE INFANTS OR VERY
YOUNG CHILDREN ARE AMONG OCCUPYING FORCES AT PANAMANIAN EMBASSY.)
PRESIDENT NOTED THAT PRESS HAD BEEN EXCLUDED BECAUSE OF HIS
FEELING THAT PUBLICITY IS NOT HELPFUL AT THIS TYPE OF MEETING.
HE ASKED AGAIN THAT FULL PRESENTATION OF GOES POINT OF VIEW
BE CONVEYED TO ALL GOVERNMENTS REPRESENTED. ON A WHIMSICAL NOTE,
PRESIDENT SAID HE WOULD NOT WISH ANY OF THOSE PRESENT THE
GOOD FORTUNE OF BEING IN A POSITION AS DIFFICULT AS HIS OWN
BUT HOPED THAT NEXT MEETING OF ASSEMBLED CHIEFS OF
MISSION WOULD BE ON SOME HAPPIER SUBJECT.
DEVINE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: GOVERNMENT REACTIONS, CIVIL DISORDERS, RURAL AREAS, EMBASSIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 14 apr 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978SANS01803
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780161-0876
Format: TEL
From: SAN SALVADOR
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780454/aaaabtztel
Line Count: 324
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 2b9801b0-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 6
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 SAN SALVADOR 1753, 78 SAN SALVADOR 1771
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2961829
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: GOVERNMENT OF EL SALVADOR'S POSITION ON RECENT RURAL VIOLENCE AND SEIZURE OF FOREIGN EMBASSIES
TAGS: PINT, PINS, SHUM, ES
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/2b9801b0-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014